Pakistan's Invitation

2659. SHRI C. M. IBRAHIM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Pakistan invited him to visit Islamabad, in the context of fundamentalists aggressive protests in Pakistan and the recent US strikes on Taliban by over-flying Pak-territory; and

(b) if so, the issues discussed during the visit, and the outcome thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) :

(a) Following the summit level talks at Agra in July this year, the Government of Pakistan extended formal invitations to the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister to visit Pakistan. These visits have not yet taken place.

(b) Does not arise.

Downsizing the structure of Ministry of External Affairs

2660. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are contemplating to downsize the structure of his Ministry both in India and abroad as similar exercises are being done by the other Ministries;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) as budgetary allocations have increased from Rs. 1509.03 crores in 1997-98 to Rs. 2720.72 crores in 2000-01, whether this increasing trend would be arrested in next year's Budget; and

(d) if so, to what extent?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) and (b) Ministry of External Affairs like all other Ministries is conducting an exercise to downsize its structure both in India and abroad under the guidelines issued by the Cabinet. Recently, Ministry of External Affairs has abolished and surrendered 151 posts.

(c) and (d) Ministry of External Affairs' budgetary allocation for the year 1997-98 was Rs. 1513.40 crores and has increased to Rs. 2625.68 crores in

2000-01. The budgetary increase in percentage terms is limited under most of the Heads. However, plan components of the budget and non-plan allocation for loans, grants, aid and credits to Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar have increased by a total of Rs. 700 crores over this period. While taking care of the growing expenditure arising out of opening of new Missions, bilateral technical cooperation projects/programmes, high level commitments for aid etc., the budget of the Ministry reflects austerity measures being implemented by the Government under various heads.

Agreement to hand over Kachchativu to Sri Lanka

2661. SHRI S. NIKRAIKULATHAN : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the terms of the original agreement on which Kachchativu was given to Sri Lanka;

(b) whether the agreement was subsequently amended;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor together with the details of the amendment;

(d) whether the Constitution of India was amended while giving Kachchativu to Sri Lanka; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) The Agreement between India and Sri Lanka on the Boundary in Historic Waters between the Two Countries and Related Matters was signed in June 1974. The Agreement states that Indian fishermen and pilgrims will enjoy access to visit Kachchativu as hitherto and will not be required by Sri Lanka to obtain travel documents or visas for these purposes.

(b) and (d) No, Sir.

(c) and (e) Do not arise.

Disappearance of Officials from Indian Missions

2662. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether certain junior level Indian Officials holding diplomatic passport disappeared during their postings at Indian Missions abroad;